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(54) Method and apparatus for matrix addressing of an electrophoretic display device

(57) An electrophoretic display has a matrix addressing structure which includes a first support structure 10 on one side of the display and a second support structure 20, substantially parallel to the said first support structure, on the other side of the display. On the inner surface 12 of the first support structure 10 there is a first set of parallel electrodes 11 and on the facing inner surface 23 of the second support structure 20 there are second 22 and third 21 sets of parallel electrodes arranged substantially orthogonal to the first set of electrodes 11. The electrodes 21, 22 of the second and third sets are interspersed with one another.

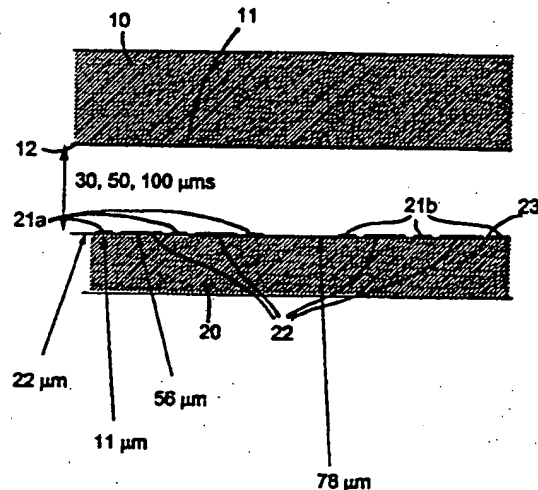


Fig.3

Description

[0001] The present invention relates to methods of and apparatus for displaying electronically stored information in a human readable form.

[0002] Flat panel displays are now part of everyday life. The best known type is the liquid crystal display (LCD) which is used widely in application varying from watch displays to large screen television displays. The technology is applied in household products, the automotive and aerospace industries, medical products and professional products. The above list is not exhaustive, but indicates how widely the technology is used.

[0003] Despite the wide range of applications of LCDs, they are not perfect for all applications. Indeed, cathode ray tubes (CRTs) are still very widely used. Other flat panel display technologies exist, although none has the significance of LCDs.

[0004] One shortcoming of conventional LCD technology is that it cannot be viewed at a high angle of incidence. In fact many LCDs are not readable at as little as only 20 degrees off-axis. This is largely due to the fact that LCDs utilize an electro-optic effect which occurs through the depth of the display. CRTs in contrast operate by causing a phosphor coating to emit light when it is bombarded by electrons. This is a surface effect which can be seen from a wide range of angles of incidence.

[0005] A different type of display technology which has not been widely adopted is the electrophoretic display (see for example Ota et. al. *Proc. IEEE*, July 1973, pp.832-836). The basic principle exploited in an electrophoretic display (see Figure 1) is that when charged particles are placed in an electric field they will migrate along the field lines. If relatively light coloured particles are suspended in a dark liquid between transparent electrodes, then the electrodes will take the colour of the particles when they are driven towards the electrodes. By segmenting the electrodes, a pattern of the particles can be selectively laid down to form a display.

[0006] When the display is viewed, the viewer sees the scattered particles. The effect is very similar to that of viewing paper as there is no change in contrast with viewing angle. This is a significant advantage over the LCD. However, owing to the fact that the display operates by particles migrating across the cell, the speed of operation is not as fast as that of a liquid crystal display.

[0007] A second difficulty with electrophoretic display technology, and one which has limited the exploitation of this technology to date, is the fact that there is no threshold for the electrophoretic effect, in other words, whatever electric field is applied to the cell the particles move. This means that a simple row and column matrix addressing system cannot be implemented. The virtues of a matrix addressing scheme have been described by several authors, for example Alt and Pleshko (*IEEE Transactions on Electron Devices*, Vol ED-21, No. 2 February 1974 pp146-155). The benefit of a matrix addressing scheme is that a 2 dimensional array consisting of N rows and M columns (i.e. N x M pixels) can be addressed by N + M address lines.

[0008] Matrix addressing schemes for use with electrophoretic displays have been developed, for example by Dalisa (US-A-4,203,106) and CopyTele (US-A-4,655,987). However these require additional electrodes to be inserted between the cell walls (see Figure 2). This is a complex manufacturing task.

[0009] According to the present invention there is provided an electrophoretic display having a matrix addressing structure comprising:

a first support structure on one side of the display, and on the inner surface of which are disposed a first set of parallel electrodes;

a second support structure on the other side of the display and arranged substantially parallel to the said first support structure, the second support structure having a surface facing the inner surface of the first support structure, said surface having disposed thereon second and third sets of parallel electrodes arranged substantially orthogonal to the first set of electrodes, electrodes of the second and third sets being interspersed with one another.

[0010] Preferably, the electrodes of the second and third sets are interleaved and may be interdigitated with one another

[0011] By adjusting the voltages on the second and third sets of interspersed electrodes and the first set of electrodes, the form of the potential gradient between the two parallel support structures can be controlled. For example, the field gradient can be linear or it can take the form of a potential well.

[0012] The first set of electrodes may form a set of column electrodes. The second and third sets of electrodes may be arranged such that the second set of the interspersed electrodes are connected in common, forming a set of grid electrodes, and the electrodes of the third set may be connected in subsets of n electrodes to form row electrodes. Independently addressable row and column electrodes can thus be provided.

[0013] Preferably, the two support structures are separated by a distance of between 5 and 500 microns, and the space between them is filled with an insulating liquid in which a dye is dissolved. The liquid contains coloured particles and a particle charging agent.

[0014] Such a display may be integrated with other standard components and used to display variable price and other information, for example in a supermarket, or to form an electronic readout device for electronically stored information, such as an electronic book.

[0015] One example of an electrophoretic display according to the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 illustrates the basic operation of an electrophoretic cell;

Figure 2 illustrates the construction of an electrophoretic cell according to US-A-4,203,106;

Figure 3 is a diagrammatic cross-section through part of a display according to the invention;

Figure 4 illustrates electric field distribution across the cell of Figure 3;

Figure 5 illustrates a plan view of the form of interdigitation of the row electrodes; and

Figure 6 illustrates detail of an electrophoretic display cell construction.

[0016] Referring now to Figure 3 and Figure 5, there are shown first 10 and second 20 support structures of an electrophoretic display 1, on the facing inner surfaces 12,23 of which are disposed, respectively, a set of column electrodes 11 (extending left-right in Figure 3) and two sets of orthogonal electrodes 21,22 (extending front-back in Figure 3). The two sets of orthogonal electrodes 21,22 comprise (a) individually addressable subsets 21a,21b of three row electrodes 21 and (b) commonly addressable grid electrodes 22.

[0017] From Figure 5 it can be seen how the grid electrodes 22 are commonly connected and interdigitated with the row electrodes 21 and how the latter are disposed in subsets a - d, each comprising three connected electrodes 21. Two grid electrodes 22 are interdigitated with each subset of row electrodes 21.

[0018] For the purpose of modelling the performance of a cell of a display of this type by using electrostatic modelling software, the widths of the grid electrodes is 56 microns, the width of the row electrodes is 22 microns and the gap between the two sets of electrodes is 11 microns. The separation between adjacent sets of electrodes is 78 microns.

The performance of the cell was modelled for a separation between the opposing surface of 30, 50 and 100 microns. [0019] A specific set of voltages applied to the individual electrodes 11,21,22 is shown in the table below for a cell gap of 100 microns.

Grid V1	Row deselect V2	Row select V3	Column V4/V5
36	0	36	26
36	0	36	36

[0020] These conditions generated the potential distribution across the cell shown in the four parts of Figure 4 when measured from the centre of a grid electrode 22 to the corresponding column electrode 11.

[0021] In Figure 4 the traces xV2 correspond to row deselect conditions and the traces xV3 to row select conditions with traces 9Vy referring to column select and traces 10Vy to column deselect. It can be seen that there is a potential well in both row deselect cases so that even when a column is selected, pigment particles will not cross the display. The only arrangement which would cause pigment particles to move from the front of the display to the rear is 9V3, corresponding to row select, column select.

[0022] A cell for a display was constructed according to the present invention (see Figure 6) using the results of the modelling given above. The two halves of the cell were both fabricated using glass as the support substrate 10,20. The electrodes 11,21,22 on both halves of the cell were produced using standard photolithography and etching processes. The front, or viewing side 10 of the cell on which the column electrodes 11 were formed used indium tin oxide (ITO) as the electrode material. The column electrodes were 226 microns wide with a gap between them of 78 microns. The row and grid electrodes 21,22 on the rear side 20 of the cell were formed using chromium metal and had the form and spacing shown in Figures 4 and 5.

[0023] The dispersion used between the substrates 10,20 was composed largely of perchloroethylene (PCE) (also known as tetrachloroethylene), with a small proportion of added Isopar. A blue dye which was a mixture of Solvent Blue 35 and Oil Red, both supplied by Aldrich Chemical Company, was dissolved in the liquid and yellow pigment particles were also added. A particle charging agent was incorporated in the dispersion.

[0024] Edge seals (not shown) were fabricated from a solvent-resistant material, and were made relatively thick in order to provide a long diffusion path to reduce leakage of the PCE. The cell was constructed as shown in Figure 6, with a U-shaped polyester spacer 40 surrounded by a bead of epoxy resin 30. When the two cell halves were forced together under pressure the epoxy flowed up to the spacer 40 and out around the cell edges forming a wide border seal.

[0025] The cell was then vacuum filled with the dispersion, and a further polyester shim inserted into the open end to form a plug. The end was then sealed with epoxy resin.

[0026] The edge connections were made with conventional liquid crystal cell edge pins, or by silver paint, to conventional PCB copper tracks.

Claims

1. An electrophoretic display having a matrix addressing structure comprising:

a first support structure on one side of the display, and on the inner surface of which are disposed a first set of parallel electrodes;

a second support structure on the other side of the display and arranged substantially parallel to the said first support structure, the second support structure having a surface facing the inner surface of the first support structure, said surface having disposed thereon second and third sets of parallel electrodes arranged substantially orthogonal to the first set of electrodes, electrodes of the second and third sets being interspersed with one another.

2. A display according to claim 1, wherein the electrodes of the second and third sets are interleaved with one another.

3. A display according to claim 1, wherein the electrodes of the second and third sets are interdigitated with one another.

4. A display according to any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the first set of electrodes form a set of column electrodes, the second set of electrodes are connected in common and form a set of grid electrodes, and the third set of electrodes form a set of row electrodes.

5. A display according to claim 4, wherein the electrodes of the third set are connected in subsets of n electrodes.

6. A display according to claim 5, wherein the electrodes of the third set are connected in subsets of three electrodes.

7. A display according to claim 6, wherein grid electrodes are disposed between each of the outer and centre electrodes of each subset of row electrodes.

8. A display according to claim 6, wherein grid electrodes are disposed only between each of the outer and centre electrodes of each subset of row electrodes.

9. A display according to any of claims 1 to 8, wherein the support structures are spaced apart by a distance in the range of 5 to 500 microns.

10. An electronic book having a display according to any of claims 1 to 9.

11. A shelf or similar shop sign for displaying price or other variable information, incorporating a display according to any of claims 1 to 9.

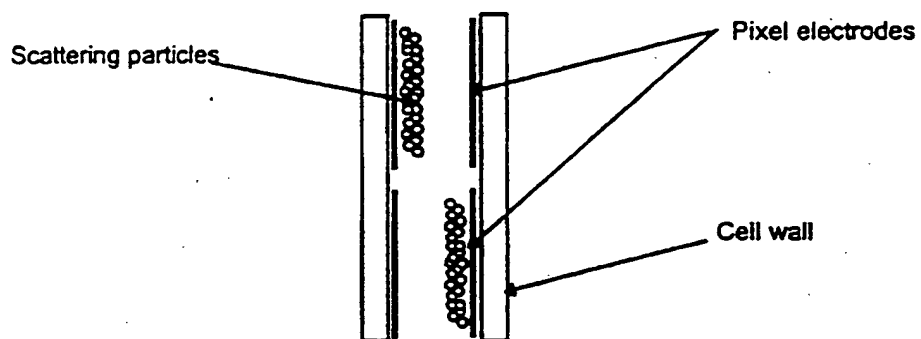


Fig.1

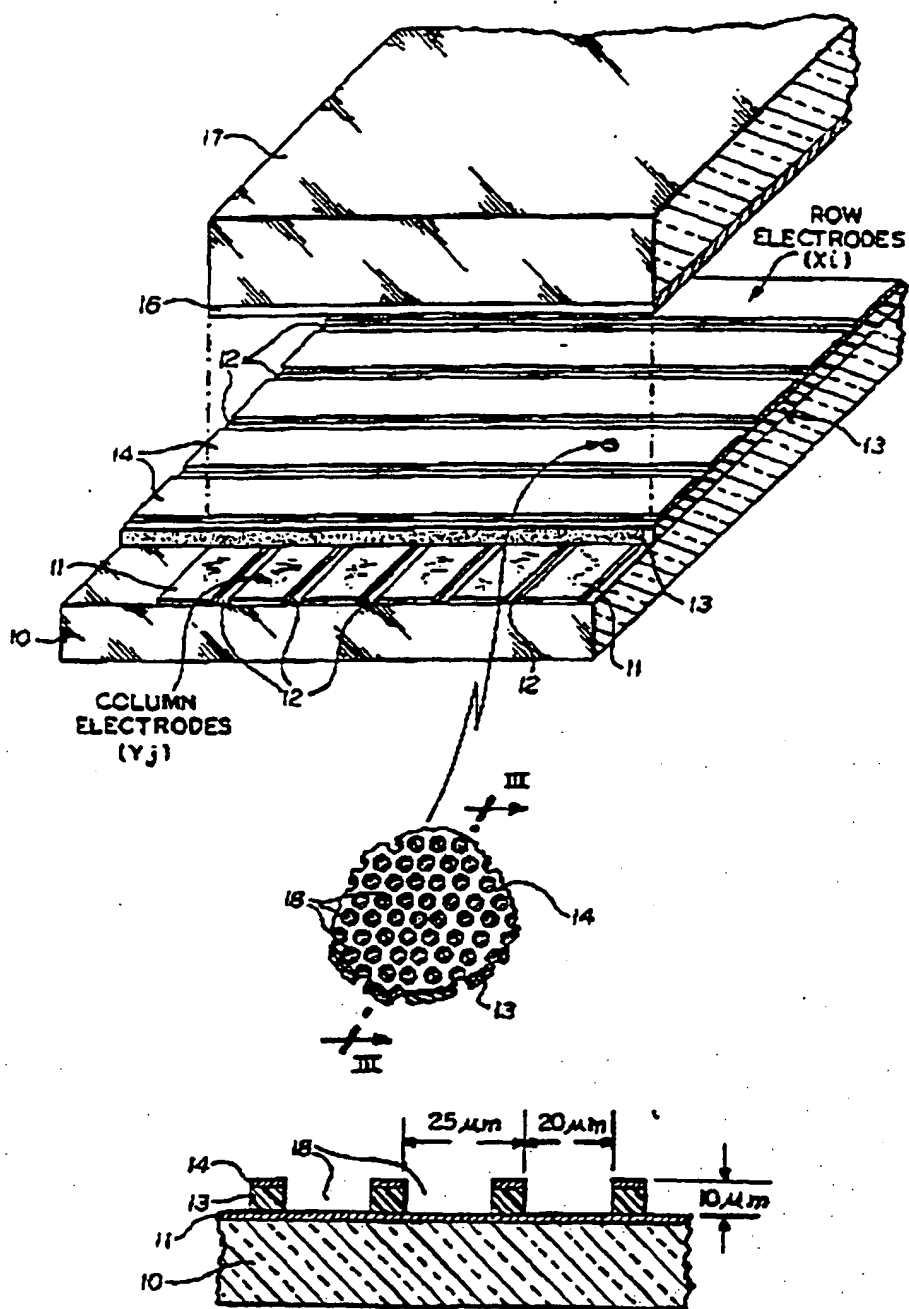


Fig.2

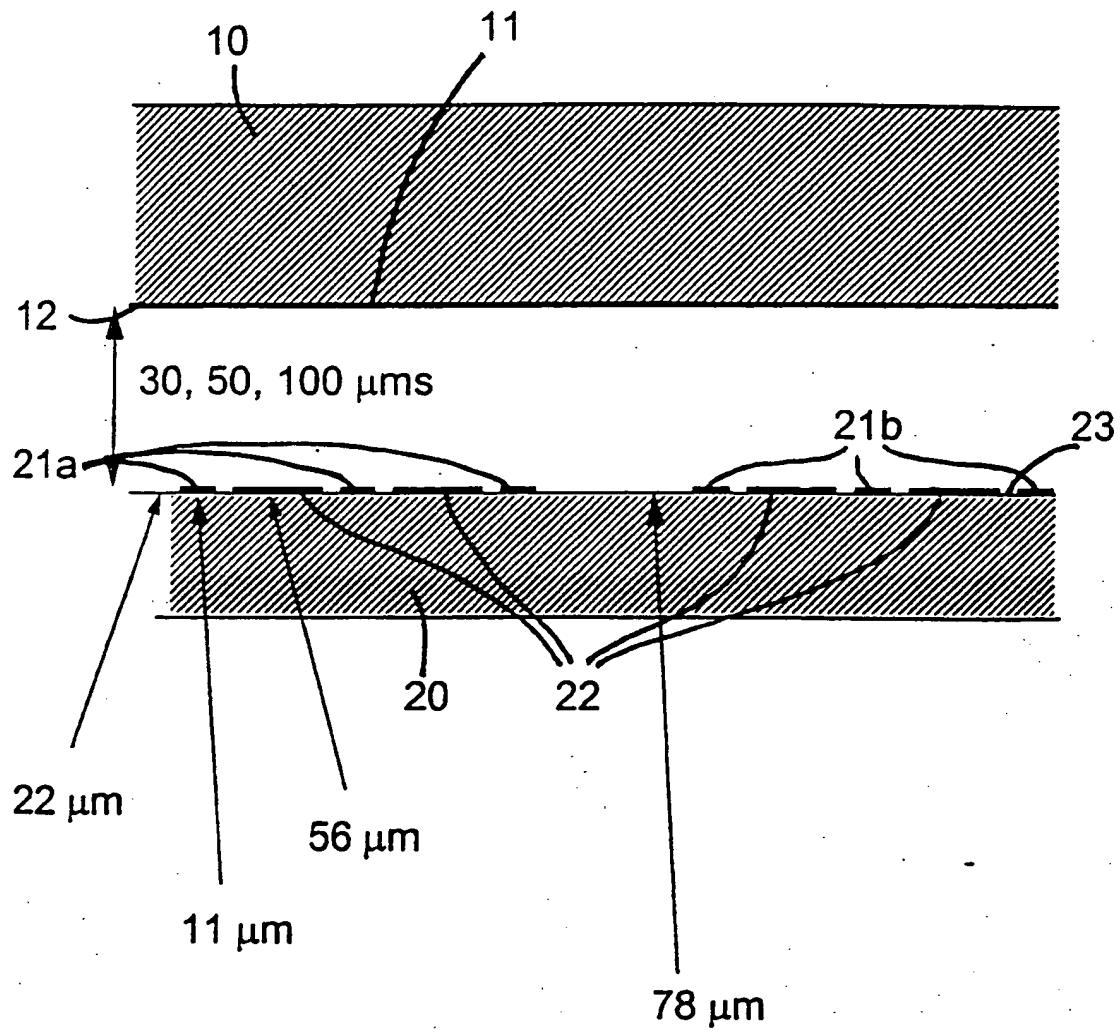
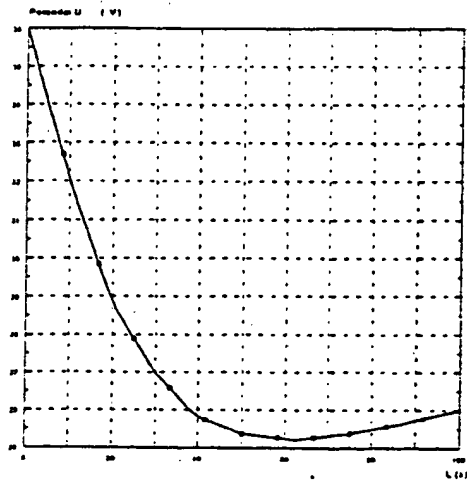
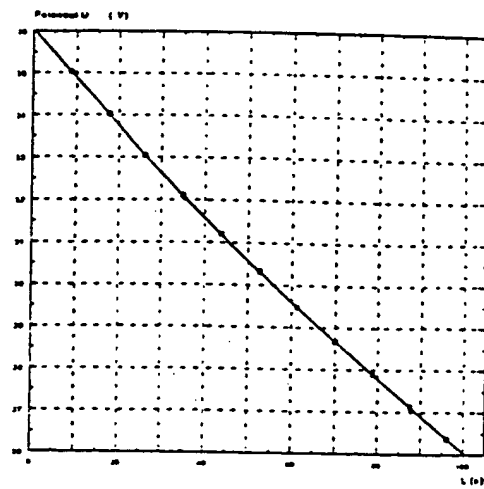


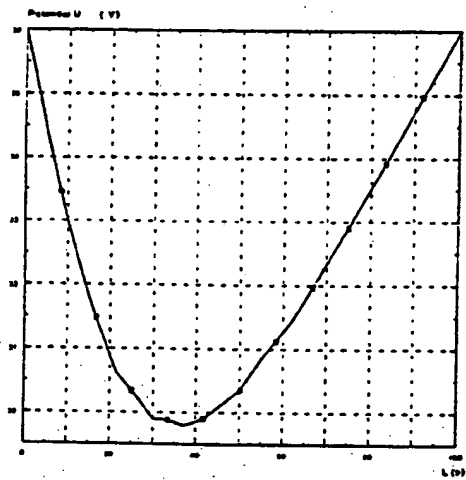
Fig.3



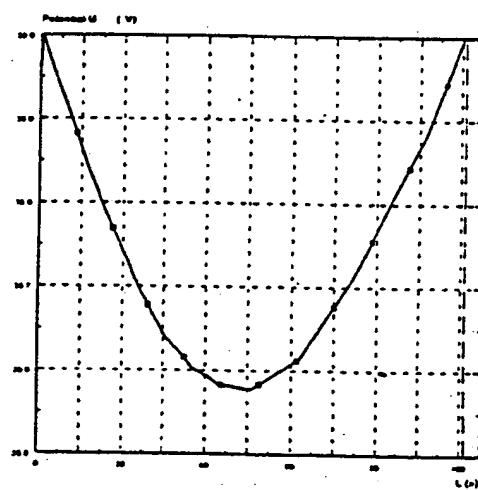
9V2



9V3



10V2



10V3

Fig. 4

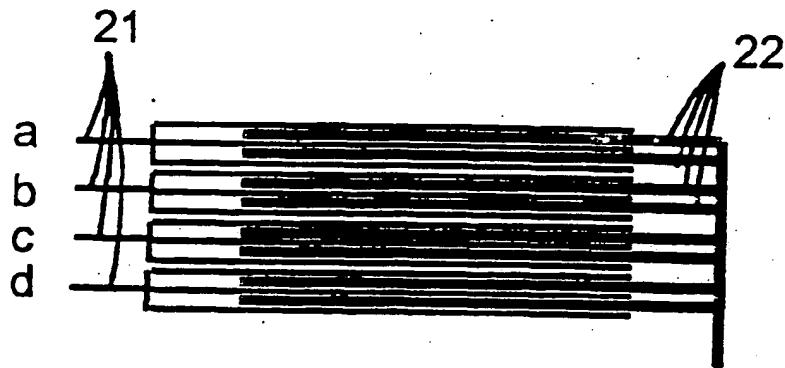


Fig.5

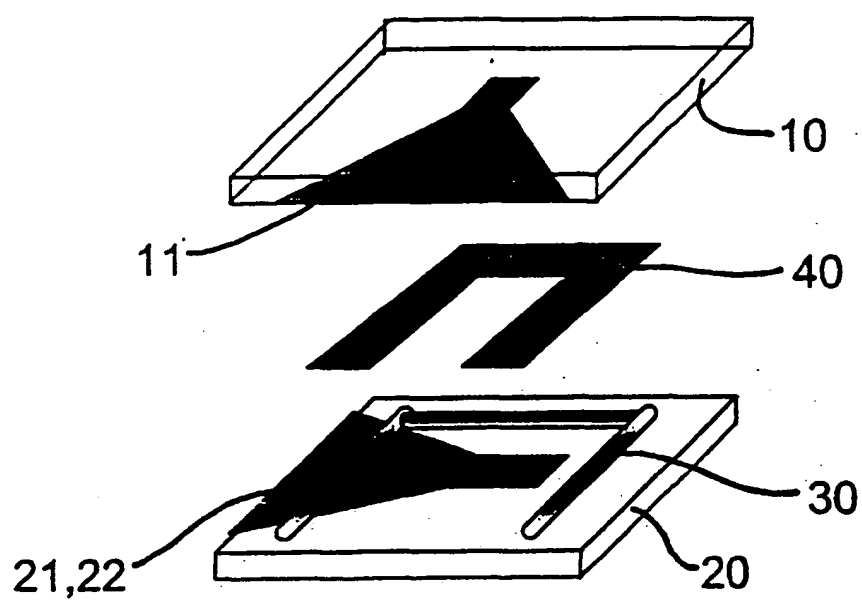


Fig.6



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 97 31 0286

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6)
X Y	WO 94 16427 A (COPYTELE INC) 21 July 1994 * page 6, line 27 - page 9, line 4; figures 1,4 *	1-3 10,11	G02F1/167
Y	US 4 322 754 A (MASON KENNETH) 30 March 1982 * column 1, line 14 - column 2, line 53 *	10	
Y	J.I.PANKOVE, ED.: "Display devices" 1980, SPRINGER VERLAG, BERLIN, DE XP002065449 Chapter 6. "Electrophoretic Displays" * figure 6.1 *	11	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6)
			G02F
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 19 May 1998	Examiner Wongel, H
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	
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EP 97 31 0286

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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